IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Kindly make the following amendments to the paragraph that begins on line 25 of page 19:

Laminin α4 gene-specific polynucleotides, including laminin α4-specific mRNA species, are determined by base sequence similarity or homology to known mammalian laminin α4-specific nucleotide sequences. Base sequence homology is determined by conducting a base sequence similarity search of a genomics data base, such as the GenBank database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/), using a computerized algorithm, such as PowerBLAST, QBLAST, PSI-BLAST, PHI-BLAST, gapped or ungapped BLAST, or the "Align" program through the Baylor College of Medicine server (www.hgsc.bcm.tmc.edu/seq_data). (E.g., Altchul, S.F., *et al.*, *Gapped BLAST and PSI-BLAST: a new generation of protein database search programs*, Nucleic Acids Res. 25(17):3389-402 [1997]; Zhang, J., & Madden, T.L., *PowerBLAST: a new network BLAST application for interactive or automated sequence analysis and annotation*, Genome Res. 7(6):649-56 [1997]; Madden, T.L., *et al.*, *Applications of network BLAST server*, Methods Enzymol. 266:131-41 [1996]; Altschul, S.F., *et al.*, *Basic local alignment search tool*, J. Mol. Biol. 215(3):403-10 [1990]). Preferably, a laminin α4-specific polynucleotide sequence, including an mRNA sequence, is at least 5 to 30 contiguous nucleotides long, more preferably at least 6 to 15 contiguous nucleotides long, and most preferably at least 7 to 10 contiguous nucleotides long. Preferably, the laminin α4-specific mRNA is at least about 45 contiguous nucleotides long. A laminin α4-specific mRNA can be, but is not necessarily, an mRNA species containing a nucleotide sequence that encodes a functional laminin α4 subunit or a fragment thereof. A suitable functional laminin α4 subunit is coded by GeneBank Accession No. Z99289 (SEQ ID NO:1). Also included among laminin α4-specific mRNAs are splice variants.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at Line 17 of page 22 as follows:

The mRNAs are amplified by a suitable amplification method. For example, in a preferred embodiment, a reverse transcriptase-mediated polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is employed to amplify *laminin α4*-specific nucleic acids. Briefly, two enzymes are used in the amplification process, a reverse transcriptase to transcribe *laminin α4*-specific cDNA from a *laminin α4*-specific mRNA template in the sample, a thermal resistant DNA polymerase (e.g., *Taq* polymerase), and *laminin α4*-specific primers to amplify the cDNA to produce *laminin* gene-specific amplification products. Examples of useful *laminin α4*-specific primers include (1) forward primer: 5' CTCCATCTCACTGGATAATGGTACTG 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:1~~ SEQ ID NO:2); and (2) reverse primer: 5' GACACTCATAAAGAGAAGTGTGGACC 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:2~~ SEQ ID NO:3). The use of limited cycle PCR yields semi-quantitative results. (E.g., Gelfand *et al.*, *Reverse transcription with thermostable DNA polymerase-high tempreature reverse transcription*, U.S. Patent Nos. 5,310,652; 5,322,770; Gelfand *et al.*, *Unconventional nucleotide substitution in temperature selective RT-PCR*, U.S. Patent No. 5,618,703).

Please amend page 37, line 24 through page 38, line 2 as follows.

The following primers were used to amplify laminin α4-specific nucleic acid:

(1) forward primer: 5' CTCCATCTCACTGGATAATGGTACTG 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:1~~ SEQ ID NO:2);

(2) reverse primer: 5' GACACTCATAAAGAGAAGTGTGGACC 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:2~~ SEQ ID NO:3).

The following primers were used to amplify β2-MG-specific nucleic acid:

(1) forward primer: 5' CTCGCGCTACTCTCTCTTTCTG 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:3~~ SEQ ID NO:4);

(2) reverse primer: 5' GCTTACATGTCTCGATCCCACTT 3' (~~SEQ. ID. NO.:4~~ SEQ ID NO:5).